

P L O U T O S (Wealth)

By Aristophanes

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

CARIO (servant)

CHREMYLOS

PLUTOS (God of wealth)

CHORUS OF FARMERS.

BLEPSIDEMOS friend of Chremylos.

Wife of CHREMYLOS

POVERTY

A JUST MAN

AN INFORMER

AN OLD WOMAN

A YOUTH

HERMES

A PRIEST OF ZEUS.

(The play takes place in ancient Athens)

ACT I.

(SCENE. A street in Athens. A farmhouse in the background. A blind man walks haltingly along followed by CHREMYLOS, a poor farmer, and his servant CARIO. Chremylos and Cario wear on their heads wreaths of laurel.)

CARIO (as he enters). O, Zeus and all ye Gods, how hard and wearisome it is to be the ^{slave} ~~servant~~ of a demented man! For though the servant may give the best of advice yet if his owner decides not to accept it the poor servant cannot do otherwise but share the evil consequences of his master's decisions. Unfortunately he is not the master of his own body; so the daemon of fortune dictates, it belongs to the man who bought it. (With a gesture of impotence). This is how things are.

Now, however, Loxias Apollo who from his golden tripod makes his oracular statements deserves my just censure. They say that he is a wise seer and that he possesses healing powers and yet he has sent my master away from his temple dejected and sad to follow the footsteps of a blind man thus doing exactly the reverse of what he should be doing. For it is we, who see clearly who should lead the way. But he just keeps trailing the blind fellow and makes do the same and never says a word to any question I ask. (To Chremylos). Aye, master, I can no longer keep quiet and I will keep on pestering you until you tell me the reason why we are following this blind man. (Jocularly). You cannot beat me, I know, because I have the sacred chaplet on. (As long as he wore the wreath he was inviolate. Transl.)

Chremylos. If you keep bothering me by Zeus, I will take that wreath off your head and you will suffer all the more for it

Cario (whistling) Tell me the old, old story. (seriously). Still I am not going to stop till you tell me who this fellow is. You know I ask all these because of my love for you.

Chremylos. Well I will not hide from you because of all my servants I consider you the most faithful of the lot and ...the arrantest thief!

The fact is that I, a god-fearing and virtuous man never did have any luck in life and have always been poor.

Cario. I know that.

Chremylos. But others prospered and grew rich - the sacrilegious, the demagogues, the informers and all kind of villains.

Cario. That is indeed, true.

Chremylos. So, I went to question the God, not on my own account for I am about to be shot off this miserable life but for my only son - whether he should change his habits, renounce his good principles become cunning and a thorough-going rascal, since that seems to me to be the only way to succeed in life.

Cario. .. And what were the words that Apollo shrieked at you from his wreaths of laurel?

Chremylos. The God told me plainly this: the first man ^I ~~you~~ meet upon leaving ~~my~~ temple to follow him, never leave go of him and persuade him to accompany me home.

Cario. Who was the first man you met?

Chremylos. (pointing to the man in front). Him.

Cario. I am afraid you did not understand ~~that~~, o, you stupid man, what the God has told you. He told you plainly enough to bring up your son according to the prevailing fashion.

Chremylos. You think so?

Cario . It is obvious. Even the blind know that it is not worthwhile trying to be good in our present life.

Chremylos. I am sure that the oracle does not indicate that but something more important. Now if this fellow can tell us where he comes from and who he is and why he has come here we will be able to find out what the oracle means.

Cario (approaching the blind man). Aye, man, tell me who you are and quick mind you.. or else..

Plutos. Go and choke yourself. That is all I have to tell you.

Cario . (to Chremylos). Did you hear what name he gave master?

Chremylos. He said that to you not me. Your manner of asking was so rude and harsh. (going up to Plutos). Friend, if you love a decent man tell me who you are.

Plutos (still angry) Go to hell I tell you.

Cario. Well, Well! This is the man and the ~~xxxxxxx~~ of the God.

Chremylos. (angrily). ~~xxxxxxx~~ Tell me, if you want to enjoy life any more who ~~xxxxxxx~~

you are or by Demeter you will die a miserable death.

Plutos. Go away and leave me alone.

Chremylos. What do you make of him?

Cario. What I am going to say is the best for all concerned master.

I will make him die miserably. I will take him to some precipice and leave him there to fall off and get killed.

Chremylos. Well do it quickly then.

Plutos (anxious) No. No!

Chremylos. Are you prepared to answer the question?

Plutos. If I do I am absolutely certain that you will treat me very badly and you will never let me go.

Chremylos. We will let you go if you want you: I swear to that.

Plutos. Let you hands off me first.

Chremylos. Alright we leave you alone.

Plutos. Now listen to me both. It seems necessary to reveal what I intended to keep a secret. Know then that I am Plutos.

Chremylos. (Astonished) O you the vilest of men you are Plutos and kept silent about it?

Cario . You Plutos (wealth) and in this miserable state!

Chremylos. O Apollo and all you Gods and Daemons, O Zeus, what are you saying? Are you really Plutos?

Plutos. Yes.

Chremylos. He himself?

Plutos. Yes, yes. Plutos Himself.

Chremylos. And wheredo you come from looking dirty all over?

Plutos. I come from ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Patrocles' (evidently some wealthy Athenian Shylock Transl.) ~~xxxx~~ who never washed since the day he was born

Chremylos. And what caused you all this misery? Tell me.

Plutos. Zeus himself, jealous of mankind ,caused me all this suffering. When I was quite young I said openly that I would visit only the worthy, the wise, the just, the good people. The Zeus, because he is jealous of all good people made me blind in order not to be able to distinguish which is which.

Chremylos. And yet the ones who honour him are the honest and good people.

Plutos. You are right there.

Chremylos. Tell me this now. If you could see again as you were able to do earlier on, would you avoid the bad and dishonest people?

Plutos. ~~esuld~~.

Chremylos. And visit the good and the just?

Plutos. Yes, of course. Though it is a long time since I have met a good man.

Chremylos. (looking round at the audience.) That is not extraordinary!

I havn't seen one either although I have got my eyes.

Plutos. Let me go now. You know all there is to know about me.

Chremylos. By Zeus no! All the more we shall hold on to you now.

Plutos. Did N't I tell you that if I revealed my name ~~thes~~ things would happen to me., And you swore to let me go if I wanted to.

Chremylos. Be persuaded to stay with me pray and don't desert me. You will not be able to find a better-mannered man anywhere.

Cario (butting in) By Zeus there is none better anywhere-eccept I.

Plutos. That is what they all say. But as soon as they get hold of me and become rich they run amok and place no limit to their vileness.

Chremylos. ~~xxxxxx~~ I grant you that. But, ~~they~~ will admitt , they are not all bad.

Plutos. By Zeus, all are bad, every single one of them.

Cario (~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ shaking his fist in Plutos' face) You will yell in no time my man.

Chremylos (to Plutos, soothingly) If you could only see the blessings tha will flow~~x~~ if you can but be persuaded to stay with us. For I trust that with God's aid I will be able to cure you of your blindness and make you see again.

Plutos. Do nothing about it I beg you. I don't want to see again.

Chremylos. What are you saying?

Cario. O, the is by nature born miserable.

Plutos (to himself) Let Zeus but hear these follies and ~~ix~~ he will make suffer bitterly for it.

Chremylos. And doesn't he do that now letting you wandering about and stumbling and falling all over the place.

Plutos. I don't know about that. The only thing I know is that I am terribly afraid of him.

Chremylos. Is that so you the most cowardly of all the Gods? Can't you understand that the tyranny of Zeus and all his thunderbolts will not be worth tuppence if you can but see again even for a liittle while?

Plutos: Stop telling me these things you cunning man.

Chremylos. Don't fuss. I will prove to you that you are far stronger than Zeus.

Plutos . You will prove that I am stronger than Zeus?

Chremylos. By heavens, yes! Now what gives Zeus the power to rule over the Gods?

Cario. His money of course. He has most of it.

Chremylos. Now, who gives him all his wealth?

Cario (indicating Plutos). This fellow here.

Chremylos. And why do people sacrifice to Zeus? Is itn't for his sake?

Cario. Yes. They sacrifice to Zeus and pray for riches.

Chremylos. Then Plutos is responsible for everything and he can easily undo the whole thing if he only wills it.

Plutos . What do you mean?

Chremylos. I mean that there will no man, none whatsoever who can bring an ox, baked bread or any other sacrifice to the altars if you yourself won't allow it.

Plutos. How is that?

Chremylos. Just so. No one can buy anything to offer unless you are about to hand the silver and so you by yourself alone can destroy the power of Zeus which causes you so much trouble.

Plutos. What are you saying? Are you implying that men sacrifice to Zeus on my account.

Chremylos. That is what I said. And moreover whatever is good and beautiful and pleasurable to men is done on your account. Everybody is slave to wealth.

Cario. As for me for the sake of some filthy money I am a slave because I have no wealth.

Chremylos. And even as they say those celebrated Corinthian

courtesans if they are approached by any poor man they turn him down but if a rich fellow goes to them they are ready to do anything, anything to gratify him

Cario. They say that the pretty boys do the same. They don't love their lovers. It's money they are after.

Chremylos. This applies only to the professional male harlots. Not to the good, the well-brought up boys. The latter never ask for money.

Cario. What do they ask then?

Chremylos. O, the one will ask for a good horse, the other for hunting dogs and so on.

Cario. Perhaps they are ashamed to ask for money and try to cover their trade by another name.

Chremylos (To Plutos) And every art and craft and all subterfuges among men were invented for your sake. It is for your sake that one sits down cobbling all day, another one works in brass, another one builds or works as a goldsmith -beating the gold received from you.

Cario. and another indulges in pickpocketing or burglaries.

Chremylos. Or one works beating and thickening cloth, washes hides or works as a tanner or sells onions or one through you if caught red-handed committing adultery gets off by having only his hair plucked (To investigate this)

Plutos. Poor me, and I knew nothing of these before.

Chremylos. Is itn't it because of you that a great king plumes and decorates himself? Is itn't for you that our Assemblies are held? Is itn't you who mans our triremes? Tell me. Is itn't you who feed the foreign occupationists at Corinth. (reference to a mercenary force sent to occupy Corinth by the Athenians against the Spartan League Transl). Is itn't for the lack of you that Pamphilos will weep bitter tears? (A dishonest politician whose property was confiscated Trans.)

Cario; And the needle-sealer too (reference to another contemporary dishonest politician transl.) along with Pamphilos? And Agyrrios because he is rich can afford to treat us like dirt

Chremylos. Is itN't because of you that Plilepsios tells his yarns and tales? or we are trying to make an alliance with the Egyptians or Lais becomes the Mistress of Philonides(Lais the famous courtesan became the mistress of Philonides an ugly man with an ass's voice because he was rich transl.)

Cario. And the tower of Timotheos (Timotheos son of Conon inherited great welth and Built hmself a tower Transl.).

Chrenylos. Iet's hope it raals and crushes him. It is for your sake that everything is done.You and you alone are the cause of everything that happens to us, good and bad alike. It is the same in war; whichever side you throw your weight with is bount to win.

Plutos. Am I so strong then to do all these things by myself?

Chremylos. Yes by Zeus! And not only thse but many more things besides. Never, never can anyone be satiated of you. Of everything else

one can have enough. Of love,

Cario. of bread,

Chremylos. of art and music

Cario of sweets

Chremylos of honour

Cario of cakes

Chremylos of heroism

Cario of dried figs

Chremylos of self respect

Cario of barley bread

Chremylos of leadership

Cario of lentils.

Chremylos. But as of you one can never have enough. For if a man will

receive thirteen talents (atalent is equal to) he

will not be satisfied and he will pine for sixteen. If you give him

sixteen he will want forty otherwise, he says his life will be

unbearably miserable.

Plutos. You appear to me to talk sense. But there is one thing that worries me.

Chremylos. What is it, tell me.

Plutos. If I posses all this power that you say I posses now ~~it~~ it bothers me how i can control it.

Chremylos. Indeed by Zeus! It's true what people say that wealth is the most cowardly of all things.

Pluto. It's not true. Some burglar must have maligned me. Having broken into a house he found nothing to pinch because everything was hidden away. So he called my forethought cowardice.

Chremylos. I shouldn't let worry you. If you are prepared to act like a man I will prove to you that you can see better than Lynceus (the fierce-eyed Argonaut who could see through solid obstacles transl.)

Plutos. How can you, a mortal man do that?

Chremylos. From what Pythian Apollo told me, shaking his garland of laurel I sincerely hope so.

Plutos. Is Apollo then implicated in this?

Chremylos. That is what I said.

Plutos. In that case, look out. (Tries to move away)

Chremylos (grasping him). Don't be disturbed my good friend. I am the man who will put straight even if I have to die in the process.

Cario. And so shall I.

Chremylos. And many allies will come to our help, just virtuous men men who possess nothing and fear to lose nothing.

Plutos. Poor me.' An unreliable lot of allies indeed.

Chremylos. No. Not if they become at once wealthy again. (To Cario) You run quickly

Cario and do what,

Chremylos. and call all my fellow-farmers ~~xxxx~~ - you will find most of them perhaps, working hard in the fields - to come here, so that each one can partake an equal share of the wealth here present.

Cario. I will be off instantly. (Shouting to the servants in the house) Someone come out and take this piece of meat I have got from the sacrifice.

Chremylos. I will take that. You run away quickly (Cario Leaves) To Plutos

Now Plutos, mightiest of all the Gods, come inside with me. Here is the house which you are going to fill, by all fair means or foul, with plenty of money to day.

Plutos. It pains me terribly, and the Gods are my witnesses, to enter every time into a strange a house. For never any good came to me out of that. If I happened to enter into a miser's house he would at once dig a hole in the ground and bury me in it. And if some honourable man ~~xxxxxxx~~ and even friend of his would come along and ~~beg~~ for some silver he would swear blind that he has never seen me in his life. If I happened to enter into a spendthrift's house what with whoring and gambling, I am in no time at all bundled naked out of doors.

Chremylos. That is because you never happened to enter the house of a decent level-headed man. For I am that type of man. I enjoy saving more so than other men and I equally enjoy spending, when it is necessary to spend. Let us enter. I like you to see my wife and my only son whom I love most dearly - ~~xxxxxxx~~ second to you, of course.

Plutos. That I believe.

Chremylos. Well, why should one tell, what is not true to you?

(Both enter the House.

ACT II

(Cario has been sent to inform ~~the~~ the neighbours about Plutos) has returned followed by the farmers who act as Chorus) Scene the same as in Act I.)

Cario. Come , comrades, friends and citizens and all you who have been married to pain who have chewed for many a day ~~xxx~~ roots of thyme with master, hurry along do not shuffle, now is the time that fortune is at hand - hurry, hurry I ask you.

Chorus. Cant' you see we are hurrying all we can but age and weakness make us unfortunately slow. You want us to run and yet you have told us nothing why your master ~~xxxxxxxx~~ has called us here.

Cario. I have been telling you that all along. You don't listen, that is the trouble. My master has said that all you now can easily say good-bye to the cold and miserable life you lead at present.

Chorus. What is that you are saying? And hoe pray can such a thing happen?

Cario. Alright doubters! I will tell you. He has here with him an old a very old man - o God how old! - dirty, wrinkled, bent, toothless quite a loathsome fellow in fact... and I shall not be at all surprised if the old boy is circumcised too

Chorus. O, you bearer of glad news what are you saying? Say it again. This man who has come has heaps of money. Is that it?

Cario. (jocularly). O, O, I am free of all the maladies that attend old age.

Chorus. I see that you are trying to make fun of us and get rid of us without giving us our share. Beaware though. for I got my stick me.

Cario. Yes, of course, you thing me by nature a twister (because he is a slave Transl.) and that I tell you tales.

Chorus (th themselves). He puts on the airs of modesty. (To Cario) Listen

boy. Your shins and arms are yelling ouu,ouu, asking for fetters and chains.

Cario. Now that you have drawn your lot why hold back. Death is ready to give you your entry ticket!

Chorus. Shut up, you congenital idiot and twister by training. Tell us why, worn out as we are, we have been called here by your master? Though we had lots of work to do and no time to do it in, yet we hastened here willingly and did not even stop to pick up some inviting thyme roots as we passed by.

Cario. I will tell you. Pluto the God of wealth is here with us and my master is going to make you all rich .

Chorus. True? We shall all be rich now?

Cario. Yes by all the Gods, you will all become Midases, if only you had asses ears.

Chorus. You have made us so happy with what you ~~have~~ said is true..that we must dance to express our jollity.

Cario (guying the old men). By all means dance. And I, acting the Cyclops oh, and stumping with both my feet I will lead you. Hey! Come my little urchins, bellowing incessantly, or bleating like lambs or stinking goats, follow after me; you will go away satiated, o you
for
~~xxxxxxx~~ rams you will have your fill.

Chorus. As for we shall follow the Cyclops dance
and bleating like hungry lambs
fresh lettuces we shall find
and grass covered in dew
by the side you lay drunk blind
and then beware,
we shall take a burning stake
and shove it in your eye.